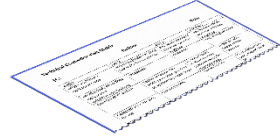


Filename: TC Article 6 06092020



Art filename: TC Matrix

Art byline: Lisa Turner

Hed: The Technical Counselor Visit: Skills

Byline: Lisa Turner

Excerpt: “Getting your builder to consider their weaknesses and how to get more experience is a big step forward in shepherding a successful project through to flight.”

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In the last article we talked about safety. Without safety awareness and practice, an accident is waiting to happen. Safety is an important topic to check off your technical counselor to-do list with your builder.

Keep in mind that I’m going into detail on a lot of different topics in the TC Matrix. As a technical counselor, you’ll be evaluating what your builder needs. In areas where you believe the builder is competent, there is no need to go through all of these separate areas. Part of your job is to pick out the areas where you will spend time with the builder. If you keep these articles in a notebook, you can use what you need, and skip around if you need to. While I have found four or five visits the minimum, you may have a situation where you will have three to even ten visits over the course of a build.

After reviewing safety, the next thing you’ll want to do is help the builder assess their skill level. Use the attached quiz to ground your builder in thinking about their skill level. Once you have earned their trust in the first visit or two, most builders will be comfortable having you advise them on a variety of tasks.

A saying I like is, “You don’t know what you don’t know.” As circuitous as it sounds, it’s a great example of when we intended a certain result but didn’t have all the information and it turned out badly. We’ve all been there. In that moment when you inadvertently screw something up and say, “Darn (or worse), I didn’t mean to do that,” you really did not intend for the task to get off track. This is why calibrating with the objectivity of another person is so helpful.

For this reason you should help the builder identify where they need skills and training. Sit down and go through the quiz answers. The builder should be doing most of the talking. Make notes on where the builder is uncomfortable. Think about how you can address the discomfort. Remind the builder that the EAA is chock full of articles, webinars, seminars, and workshops.

Next, take a look at the planning information with the timeline that you developed earlier (TC Article #3). Have you included enough time for skills training, workshops, webinars, and practice? If not, add that in to the schedule.

Next, consider what you can offer in the way of training or demonstration yourself. I know when I was building my first aircraft, my technical counselor was enormously helpful in showing me many techniques and tricks, including how to do fiberglass layups without using too much resin. Just seeing the process made all the difference for me.

If there are large gaps in knowledge, experience, or skills, recommend a workshop. The hands-on training the builder will get will be invaluable. The EAA provides workshops, or the local EAA chapter may be a resource. And there is always the option of video and self-study.

Getting your builder to consider their weaknesses and how to get more experience is a big step forward in shepherding a successful project through to flight. Don't skip this step or traps could spring up later to stop the project cold.

SEE QUIZ